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Response 10/1/84

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U.S. v. AVX Original
Litigation Document

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Dear Gerry:

I am writing to describe the results of our investigation in the vicinity of the New Bedford Harbor Superfund sites. Approximately three weeks ago, myself and several residents drove and walked around the outside of the Sullivan's Ledge site, and the west and east banks of the Acushnet River Estuary between 1/2 mile north of the Woods Street Bridge and the Coggeshall Street Bridge. We looked for areas which were obviously accessible by residents, particularly kids, and whenever possible, asked workers and residents whether they had seen children in these areas. The following paragraphs summarize toxic site areas found to be obviously accessible by people and which were frequented by children according to neighbors. It is our hope that these areas will be looked upon as priority sites for fencing by Region 1 EPA. Our recommendations in the past have outlined plans for fencing accessible areas with 6 foot high cyclone fencing; topped, and if necessary, bottomed with a spiral of barbed wire. This type of fencing has been found to be quite effective at limiting access for several years on highways, construction sites, industrial parks and toxic sites. The areas listed below should serve as a starting point for fencing, but several additional regions should be investigated in the near future for limiting public accessibility.

Sullivan's Ledge:

Here we found a few dirt paths leading from the north side of the Sullivan's Ledge property into the site from the motel parking lot. It appeared to be a woodsy area from this side, and was completely unfenced. The Hathaway street or east side of the ledge was essentially unfenced, since the fence was only four feet high, made of thin gauged rectangular wire, and tumbled down in more places than not. One warning sign was found well hidden on a post behind undergrowth stating, "No Trespassing, Might Contain Hazardous Materials, Police Take Notice". On the south side we found another warning sign on the gate, but no fencing. The entire drainage from the ledge or the area with higher elevation,

was clearly into the south side stream which runs along the east-west southern border. A worker at the 'Scrub a Dub Car Wash' located near the entrance of the site, stated that kids ran like rats in that stream and all around the area. The stream apparently leads to the airport. The entire Sullivan's ledge area should be fenced on all sides including surrounding the stream.

West Side of the Acushnet River Estuary:

The worst section of the entire west side appeared to be the Coffin Street Cove area where very high levels of PCB's have been detected in the mud flats. There is a large playground here which is nearly completely open to the river banks. The open area extends across Riverside and down to the river on Coffin street. Workers stated that kids were in that water area constantly, especially during hot summer months, and that people had been seen wading and fishing.

Moving north from here along Beleville Avenue, towards Aerovox: the south side of the Mars and American Press Companies are extensions of Coffin avenue and completely unfenced. Next, the Cameo Curtain Draperies Company needs fencing at the end of the driveway since there is access here to the river. The Fiber Leather Company on Beleville is completely open during the day but it is unclear whether it is open at night. The back of this area leads to a wide open river bank section, and includes an area where barrels are stored. While many of the companies are fenced off along here, the entire west side of Beleville Avenue is heavily residential and obviously has kids playing all over the open areas on the east side down to the river. Moving north along River street near Howard Avenue, the Chamberlain residence is unfenced in back, down to the river. This area should be fenced up to the Coyne Company. Moving further north, there appears to be adequate fencing up to the Wood street Bridge. Some of these companies have open gates and some include guards. Unguarded gates are probably open during the day to entrance by kids. This may be a concern, but it is not nearly as important as those spots previously listed since it is a fairly dense industrial area and less likely that kids are getting to the river here. One suggestion would be to serve a notice to companies along this stretch to alert owners and employees to the effort to keep people from the river area.

The Woods Street Bridge is fenced across the river, but it is unfenced to the north. Judging from the very high levels of PCB's that have been found just north of Aerovox, it is recommended that a high priority fencing program extend to at least 1/2 mile north of the Wood Street Bridge on both the west and east side of the river.

East Side of the Acushnet River Estuary:

Most of this side of the river was found to be unfenced along areas reported to have sediment PCB levels in the greater than 1,000 ppm range (the highest concentration range). Beginning with the Woods Street Bridge and moving south in town of Acushnet: The Titielist Golf Ball Company parking lot is open in the south west section leading to the river banks. There are many homes just north of this parking lot and children playing in the area. Continuing south along South Main Street Acushnet, there are several streets that run west toward the river with dense housing. Many of these end before the banks and lead to bike paths, power lines, open fields and generally attractive river bank land. We spoke with many residents back on these streets who told us that people fish on a regular basis in the river along this side and that it serves as a play ground for all the children along here. The goal would be to fence off the bank itself to keep people from the river and to allow the rest of the land to remain open for use.

The following is a list of noted areas where people and children have access and use the river: Off South Main Street at the Acushnet Nursing home a small residential street runs west down towards the river. A dirt bike path extends at the end of this road down to the river. This is north of a set of power lines running east-west across the east bank. The bank should be fenced beginning with Titielist, across the dirt bike path, across the power lines, and continuing to Prouteau Street (the next residential street running to the river). Housing near the banks gets denser as we head south towards Fairhaven. At Leewyers and Lawson Avenues, off of South Main, Beech street runs much closer to the banks of the river parallel to South Main. There are many houses along Leewyers Ave., Lawson Ave., and Beech Street. Mothers spoke with great concern about how to keep kids in the neighborhood from fishing and playing in the river. It was also reported here that adults fished along this section. Riverside auto salvage sits back here as well which should probably be fenced off. Streets running into the river as we continue south from here include: Porter St., Burr Ave., Pleasant St., Springhill Street, Harding Street, Magnolia Avenue, and down into Sycamore Street which runs parallel and close to the River banks down to the Coggeshall Street Bridge. The only adequately fenced off area along Sycamore was the Madeiros Bus Company.

Sycamore street itself was alledgedly the site of dredge landfilling from the construction of I-195 in the late 60's. There is concern about possible health effects reported by residents along this street that might be related to PCB exposures. These included cancers. This street runs down to the Rio Plaza shopping center area on the Coggeshall Street Bridge. This apparently was built entirely on dredged river sediments

during this same period. The soil in homes along sycamore and surrounding the Rio Plaza should be sampled for PCB's. Residents in these areas may very well be breathing contaminated dust since there are substantial plots of land here which are unpaved with unvegetated open dirt.

Summary of Recommended Fencing Along the East Bank of the River: Fence from 1/2 mile north of the Wood Street Bridge down to this Bridge. Begin again at the Titielist Golf Parking lot south of the Woods St. Bridge and continue along the banks all the way south to the stretch along Sycamore street, with the exception of the bus company. The fence should tightly surround the paved section of the Rio Plaza parking area until remedial investigations provide more information on dangers here. It should end by closing off the Coggeshall Bridge from the Land surrounding the Rio Plaza parking lot and closing the bridge off from the river.

I sincerely hope that this effort will result in the intallation of fencing in the areas listed as urgent here. I also appreciate your time and indicated interest in working with citizens expressing concerns over the four town New Bedford Harbor Superfund site. I believe working with citizen concerns is of the utmost importance in carrying out remedial programs that are thorough and maximize the protection of the public. I hope our work here will serve as a model for other superfund sites. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Richard C. Bird, Jr., MPH